

RE-CREATING RECREATION: HEMI-SYNC® IN COMPETITIVE AND COOPERATIVE SITUATIONS

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Stephen Graf has specialized in applied behavior analysis with general interests in informational and educational technology and, particularly, applications of Standard Celeration Charting. A professor in the psychology department of Youngstown State University for twenty-two years, he has edited the Association for Behavioral Analysis Newsletter for the last ten. In this paper, Dr. Graf explores the implications of engaging in recreational activity from a cooperative rather than a competitive stance and how Hemi-Sync might factor into the resulting equation.

The categories of human behavior described as “competitive” and “cooperative” seem to have played significant roles throughout recorded history. If we allow for the possibility of long-term and episodic challenges to our continuing existence on the planet, we should strategically plan to improve our abilities to cooperate. One way to accomplish improvement would be to structure our recreational pursuits along cooperative venture lines. How might Hemi-Sync be used to help advance such ideals? This was the problem confronted in several experiential demonstrations for Professional Members attending the 1994 Professional Seminar at The Monroe Institute last July.

Long-term challenges to human existence include such processes as overpopulation, famine or crop failures, disease, and deterioration of the ozone layer. None of these processes take place in an instant but rather extend over various lengths of time. Episodic challenges include earthquakes, tidal waves, pole shifts, and collisions with sufficiently sized chunks of matter. These processes wreak instant devastation to potentially large segments of humanity. Nuclear war should also be included in this category under a subheading of self-inflicted destruction. Occurrence of any of these challenges could change our lives dramatically within scant amounts of time.

Competitive behavior involves wins and losses—a gain by one entity at the expense of another. Instances range from wars between nations to verbal exchanges between couples. The beliefs that often underlie competition equate to statements such as “It’s either us or them” or “It’s either you or me.” Cooperative behavior involves gains by everyone involved. The notions that “We can make it” or “We’re in this together” represent expressions of this type of belief. Instances range from large-scale disaster relief efforts to two individuals working together to solve a problem.

Much of our recreational time—doing what we want to do rather than what we need to do—ties into competitive endeavors. We may watch athletes matching skills or we may get caught up in a suspenseful story pitting “good guys” against “bad guys.” Some of us may actually even engage in competition ourselves instead of simply spectating. Competitive situations seem to permeate our lives—not just our recreational behavior. We compete for grades, for academic honors, for positions in the band, for spots on the team, for jobs, for promotions, for markets, for territory, for trade superiority, etc. From a personal to a national level, we get caught up in the “you or me” conflict.

What if we re-created our recreational activities to emphasize cooperative behaviors? What changes might that produce in our perspective on other parts of our lives? To be sure, cooperation can already be found interwoven in the competitive context. Players on one team cooperate, but their basis for cooperation can still be linked to competition—beating the other team.

The bulk of sport involves the win-lose aspect. The exhilarative arousal from the action usually takes a back seat to the competitive characteristics. A different emphasis would be a drastic departure from our current time-space events. Could the nature of cooperative events hold our interest as well as competitive ones have?

The following three experiences were contrived to sample the actions and feelings associated with recreational experiences of a competitive and cooperative nature.

Experience One

Our first game had a somewhat typical “us or them: survival of the fittest” theme. Participants paired off into two-person teams with one member of each team blindfolded. After being led off to an unknown position on the slopes of the Institute grounds, the blindfolded individuals had to rely on their partners to guide them to survival—a designated goal area. All the “guides”—the sighted members of the teams—were cordoned off together in a small area approximately equidistant from the dispersed blindfolded players. Since all voice communications originated from the same area, blindfolded players had to rely on voice familiarity or other clues—intuitive or otherwise—to navigate their course. Collisions would produce annihilation for anyone involved. The “winner” reached the goal area first.

Experience Two

Our second game substituted a cooperative theme, “utopia or oblivion: everybody or nobody!” Participants remained paired as in the initial game with the other partner now donning the blindfold. Each blindfolded player held a tennis ball—a vaccine—which needed to be delivered

to the goal area. Blindfolded players were again dispersed randomly with sighted individuals remaining together in a prescribed area. All the blindfolded players needed to reach the goal for everyone to survive. This meant no collisions could occur between blindfolded players. Instructions were that everyone should cooperate in whatever way feasible. Sighted partners were again encouraged to call out instructions. In addition to the non-contact rule, all blindfolded players needed to reach the goal area within a five-minute time limit for everyone to survive. The time limit was not met. Unfortunately, the cooperative venture failed when individuals collided and all were lost.

Following Experience Two, we went “home” to Focus 27 inside David Francis Hall where an interesting question was raised by Connie Townsend. Under instructions to cooperate in whatever way feasible, why had the blindfolded participants not communicated their positions to each other to avoid colliding? Perhaps this represents one of the subtle dangers of our strongly competitive culture. We haven’t learned to cooperate effectively to the extent that might be necessary in such emergency situations as those represented by the game. Jack Auman, my associate, had produced a random number generating program that followed the research done by Brenda Dunne and Robert Jahn at Princeton University over the past fifteen years. Beverly Rubik of the Center for Frontier Sciences at Temple University described this research in her presentation at TMI’s 1993 Professional Seminar. We thought it would be interesting to combine the Dunne and Jahn ideas of attempting to influence random numbers in specific directions with Hemi-Sync METAMUSIC® in the background. In addition, participants would again engage in competitive and cooperative aims.

Experience Three

Participants were split into two groups and a series of trials ensued. In the initial set, no METAMUSIC background was used. Subsequently, Mark Certo provided first Focus 10 and then Focus 12 selections. Each was five minutes in duration. On cooperative trials, half the participants were to aim high while the other half were to aim low. On other trials, participants were instructed not to try to influence the numbers in any way. This provided a no-intent control comparison.

Experiments of this type usually run substantially longer than the fifteen minutes we spent sampling the various conditions. On the trials we ran, the no-intent controls produced a preponderance of low numbers with the odds against the result equal to 71 to 1. Cooperative high attempts and cooperative low attempts were not significant. Competitive high/low attempts had a preponderance of low numbers with the odds against the result equal to 27 to 1. An individual desiring to run a cooperative trial at the conclusion of our session produced a preponderance of high numbers with odds against the obtained results at 160 to 1.

Experience Three provided some samples from the group on a random number influencing program being used for the first time. The group found it amusing that the most unimpressive results came from the cooperative conditions, while the competitive and no-intent conditions produced seemingly significant outcomes.

In a culture driven for centuries on competition, yet now faced with challenges of global concern, perhaps we need to look carefully at the development of cooperative behavior throughout the fabric of our lives. The enigmatic conclusion drawn from the attempts to “switch on” cooperative efforts with the Professional Seminar group seemed to indicate that this may be more challenging than we would have anticipated. The heightened focus capabilities that Hemi-Sync has reliably produced suggest that it could be a valuable catalyst in future studies of the phenomena described above. A strength of Hemi-Sync research and experience has been how repeatable practiced effects become. This would seem to provide an admirable match for the kinds of studies that are criticized for the lack of such repeatability.

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